(c) by when the flights would start operating to the new destinations; and

(d) whether it is a fact that the number of flights of Indian Airlines to Pakistan have not been increased due to insufficient number of passengers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) Yes, Sir.

Shortage of Pilots

†3516. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian aviation sector is facing acute shortage of pilots;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and the efforts made by Government to deal with inadquate strength of pilots; and

(c) the efforts made by Government to ensure attractive salaries and appropriate arrangement of traning for the pilots in the Indian aviation sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) As against requirement of 1580 sets of crew equivalent to 3160 professional pilots, 2940 pilots are available leaving a shortfall of 7%.

(b) The expansion of fleet by both Indian Airlines and Air India as well as by some of the major private players and the entry of new players in the aviation sector has increased the demand of type—rated pilots in the industry. The airlines are coping up with the demand by employing ex-patriate pilots and retired pilots below the age of 65 years, subject to medical fitness.

(c) Air India and Indian Airlines are offering emolument packages

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

comparable with industry standards. The Government has taken various steps to reduce the gap between demand and supply of skilled pilots. These include conditionally increasing the age-limit to 65 years for pilots for exercising the privileges of their licences for commercial transport operations under prescribed conditions for pilots, upgradation and modernisation of traning in frastructure of Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademi (IGRUA) to enhance its training capacity, setting up of a world class flying training institute at Gondia, Maharashtra and assistance to flying clubs by allocating trainer aircraft through Directorate General of Civil Aviation/Aero Club of India.

GoM's report on merger of IA/AI

†3517. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Group of Ministers constituted to recommend measures regarding the merger of Air India and Indian Airlines has submitted its report to Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Employees Organization of Air India and Indian Airlines have also been consulted for addressing different matters relating to the employees of the said airlines;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) by when both the airlines are proposed to be merged?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a), (b) and (e) The Group of Ministers in its meeting held on 21st February, 2007 cleared the merger of Air India and Indian Airlines into a new entity. Subsequently, this was also approved by the Cabinet on 1st March, 2007. As a first step, the new Company namely "National Aviation Company of India Limited" has been incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 on 30.03.2007. Financial and legal formalities for merging the two airlines are likely to be completed by July, 2007.

(c) and (d) 11 Employees Unions/Associations etc. of Air India and 8 of

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